

need to help them. Do not deny them the opportunity to do that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MICA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EDUCATION HAS BEEN A PRIORITY TO THIS CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I have often listened to the debate in these Chambers. Sometimes I feel like I am in a schoolyard where we have fourth-graders taunting each other back and forth, saying my program is better than yours, and you are a bad guy because you are not saying my program is a good program. We just have to remember that today is an election year, and we are just 3½ weeks away from that date.

I also noted that one of my colleagues tried to elevate the debate by quoting the Washington Post. Once I did that. I was back home in a town meeting back in my district. I quoted the Washington Post, and I kind of realize at times when I read the Washington Post that they don't like anybody. Two weeks ago they were calling on the President to resign. Now they are saying Congress is bad.

Whether or not Members want to quote the Washington Post, folks in Hegewish and south Chicago, they don't care what the Washington Post says. They are looking for a solution.

One thing I found from town meetings, meetings at the union hall, the VFW, the grain elevator, or a suburban women's club meeting, they are saying that they are tired of partisan politics. They are looking for solutions. That is why they are pretty proud of what this Congress has done in the last few short years.

If we think about it, think of all the things we were told that we could not do. I am one of those who was elected in 1994, this new Republican majority for the first time in 40 years.

I was told by the Washington Post and the New York Times and all the other liberals in the world that we cannot balance the budget, but we did it. They told us that we could not cut taxes, but we did it. They told us we could never reform welfare, but we did it. They told us we could not restructure the IRS, but we did it.

If we think about it, this Congress in the last 2 years has done some big things that we were told we could not do by many of those on the other side of the aisle. We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years, we cut taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, we reformed our welfare

system, helping kids and families for the first time in a generation, and we restructured the IRS, taming the tax collector for the first time ever.

Those are pretty big accomplishments, something I am really proud of, because it took a Republican Congress to do that, and I am pleased that a Democrat President joined with us in a bipartisan effort to bring those four accomplishments and those four solutions home.

We are often asked, what is our next challenge? What more can we do to change how Washington works and to make Washington more accountable to the folks back home? Clearly, education is a priority for all of us.

When I am back home and I am walking through, whether it is Lincoln Way High School, which is one of the best in the Nation, in New Lenox, or in the south side of Chicago, in the Chicago public schools, or LaSalle Peru in the Illinois Valley, and I talk to local school board Members, administrators, teachers, and parents, they say, Congressman, about 4 to 6 cents of every dollar we spend on our public schools comes from Washington, but we also want you to know that with that 4 to 6 percent of the funding we spend on our local public school comes two-thirds of the paperwork we have to fill out.

If we look at how those dollars actually get spent when we appropriate them in Washington, only about 70 cents on the dollar actually reaches the classroom. Thirty cents on the dollar gets spent on bureaucratic overhead before it gets back to Illinois schools. Something is wrong. We need to do a better job.

Over the last few years we have made a difference, trying to change how Washington works to make sure when we appropriate funding that it counts, and education was a big winner last year when we balanced the budget. Not only did we make education a priority, but we increased funding for education in our budget by 10 percent, a \$5.4 billion funding increase over the previous year, even while balancing the budget.

Unfortunately, 30 cents on the dollar stays here in Washington. One clear message from the folks back home is we need to leave less money in Washington and get more money back to the classroom. That is why I am proud that we passed earlier this year legislation that will put more dollars into the classroom by streamlining the process, not saying 70 cents on the dollar, but actually 95 cents on the dollar reaching the classroom.

I am proud that this Republican Congress has given us the lowest student loan rates in 17 years, and that we have doubled Pell grants to twice what they were when I was sworn in 4 years ago to help low-income students better afford college with an outright grant. This year while the President ignored special ed, we provided \$500 million more for special education in our local public schools.

Last year, while we were working to balance the budget, we created the first ever school construction bond program, providing almost \$1 billion in helping build new classrooms for our schools. We increased funding for Head Start low-income kids in my district.

Mr. Speaker, education is a priority. We have given it a 21-gun salute. This House has passed 21 initiatives to help education in just the last 2 years. Education is a priority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. PELOSI addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STILL TOO BIG, WITH A DEFENSE BUDGET TOO SMALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Department will announce that the Federal budget is in surplus for the first time since 1969. Only 2 short years ago the President of the United States submitted a budget with a \$200 billion deficit, as far as the eye can see, if Members will recall.

What happened? There are a lot of Americans, and most Americans, including us, who really do not care where the credit falls, just as long as this Congress stays committed to a balanced budget and reducing the size of government. But it is important to understand how we got here, where we are today, so we can continue on the path of sound economic recovery.

Remember when the country was faced with large, chronic deficits at the beginning of the 1990s? Congress faced a choice. To cut the deficit, lawmakers had one of two choices to make, to cut spending or to raise the taxes. President Clinton and his allies here in the Congress chose to, remember, raise taxes. Congress at that time was still under the control of the Democrats, so President Clinton was able to get through the largest tax increase in the history of this great Nation.

Republicans, on the other hand, wanted to reduce the deficit by cutting spending. Republicans believe that government is too big and too bossy, and they believe that Washington wastes too much of our money. One would think that this is an obvious point to us, because it is to the American people. After all, even the President himself said in his 1996 State of the Union